Thriplow & Heathfield Neighbourhood Plan

Appendix 3

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) – citations

COUNTY: **Cambridgeshire**

SITE NAME: **Whittlesford-Thriplow, Hummocky Fields**

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Local Planning Authorities: South Cambridgeshire District Council
National Grid Reference: TL 428463
TL 451488
Ordnance Survey Sheet **1:50,000:** 154 **1:10,000:** TL 44 NE, TL 44 NW
Date Notified (Under 1949 Act):
Date of Last Revision:
Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1987
Date of Last Revision: 1993
Area: TL 428463, 7.9 ha 19.5 ac, TL 451488 47.74 ha 117.99 ac
Other information: This is a new addition to the Cambridgeshire Schedule. Part of the SSSI as notified in 1987 has been deleted at this revision.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Fields at Whittlesford and Thriplow have a combination of local topography and agricultural practice which provides a suitable habitat for the nationally rare species grass poly *Lythrum hyssopifolia*. This species is now confined in mainland Britain to a small area of south Cambridgeshire where it occurs locally in shallow depressions in arable fields, together with a number of scarce bryophytes. The occurrence of the nationally uncommon fairy shrimp *Chirocephalus diaphanus*, in some of the hollows, adds to the importance of the site.

The depressions in which grass poly occurs are a result of the melting of ice lenses after the last glaciation. They support a characteristic assemblage of plant species including grass poly, toad rush *Juncus bufonius*, greater plantain *Plantago major* ssp. *intermedia*, knotgrass *Polygonum aviculare*, redshank *P. persicaria* and the very local tasteless water-pepper *P. mite*. The uncommon liverworts *Riccia cavernosa*, *R. warnstorfii* and *R. subbifurca* are also present. Both flooding and ploughing are essential in maintaining this specialised community and so the depth of the depressions is a crucial factor.

The fairy shrimp is also present. It is an uncommon crustacean which occurs in temporary freshwater pools where predators are absent. The extremely drought-resistant eggs of this species enable it to survive during periods when the pools are dry. The fairy shrimp has shown a marked decline in frequency during this century, probably as a result of improved drainage and infilling of seasonal pools.

Re-presentation of details approved by Council. Re-typed August 1999.

COUNTY: Cambridgeshire

SITE NAME: Thriplow Meadows

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Local Planning Authorities: South Cambridgeshire District Council
National Grid Reference: TL 437470
Ordnance Survey Sheet **1:50,000:** 154 **1:10,000:** TL 44 NW
Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1963
Date of Last Revision: 1971
Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1984
Date of Last Revision:
Area: 3.3 ha 8 ac

Other information: A boundary modification has been made to exclude some 5 acres which has been reseeded. The Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely Naturalists' Trust have a nature reserve agreement on this site.

Description and Reasons for Notification

This site supports species-rich neutral pasture of variable drainage characteristics, ranging from dry with calcareous influences, to marshy areas containing many uncommon plants. The habitats represented are geographically a lowland England type, examples of which are now scarce and occur mainly as scattered and fragmented sites.

The grassland communities are characterised by the presence of such species as red fescue *Festuca rubra*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* and knapweed *Centaurea nigra*.

The wetter areas are dominated by a mixture of grasses, sedges and rushes with a good range of typical wetland herbs such as ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi*, fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica* and purple loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*. A number of species uncommon in the region are also present, and of particular note is the large population of marsh orchids *Dactylorchis pratermissa* and *D. incarnata*. The small area of dry grassland is calcareous in nature reflecting the presence of underlying chalk. The dominant grass is false oat *Arrhenatherum elatius* and herbs present include the field scabious *Knautia arvensis*.

Hedgerows, scrub and peripheral watercourses provide additional habitats on the site.

COUNTY: Cambridgeshire

SITE NAME: Thriplow Peat Holes

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Local Planning Authorities: South Cambridgeshire District Council
National Grid Reference: TL 450475
Ordnance Survey Sheet **1:50,000:** 154 **1:10,000:** TL 44 NW, TL 44 NE
Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1958
Date of Last Revision: 1971
Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1986
Date of Last Revision: Area: 10.4 ha 25.7 ac
Other information: A boundary amendment has been made.

Description and Reasons for Notification

The Thriplow Peat Holes hold remnants of relic fen and alder carr habitats which are now very restricted both nationally and especially locally.

Such overgrown fen and alder carr communities are characteristically rich in invertebrate life and ponds and ditches within the site further enhance this value.

The vegetation of the alder carr is characteristically alder *Alnus glutinosa*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and willow *Salix cinerea*, together with guelder rose *Viburnum opulus*. Herbs include common reed *Phragmites australis*, herb Bennet *Geum urbanum* and herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*. The ferns broad buckler fern *Dryopteris austriaca* and male fern *Dryopteris filix-mas* are common.

The site is additionally of historical interest, the botany having been recorded for over 300 years. Past records have included sundews *Drosera* sp. and butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris* which are characteristic of acid soils. More typical fen species which have been recorded are the bog bean *Menyanthes trifoliata*, marsh helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*, grass of parnassus *Parnassia palustris* and the great fen sedge *Cladium mariscus.*